THE FLAG OF LIBERTY

THE FLAG OF LIBERTY

A True History of the Most Notorious Pirates

Illustrated by DoubleWhy

This book is dedicated to David
– and every rebel who sails under the flag of liberty...

First published in London, 2025 by Dog Section Press, a worker-owned cooperative

Printed by Calverts, a worked-owned cooperative

ISBN 9781739421625

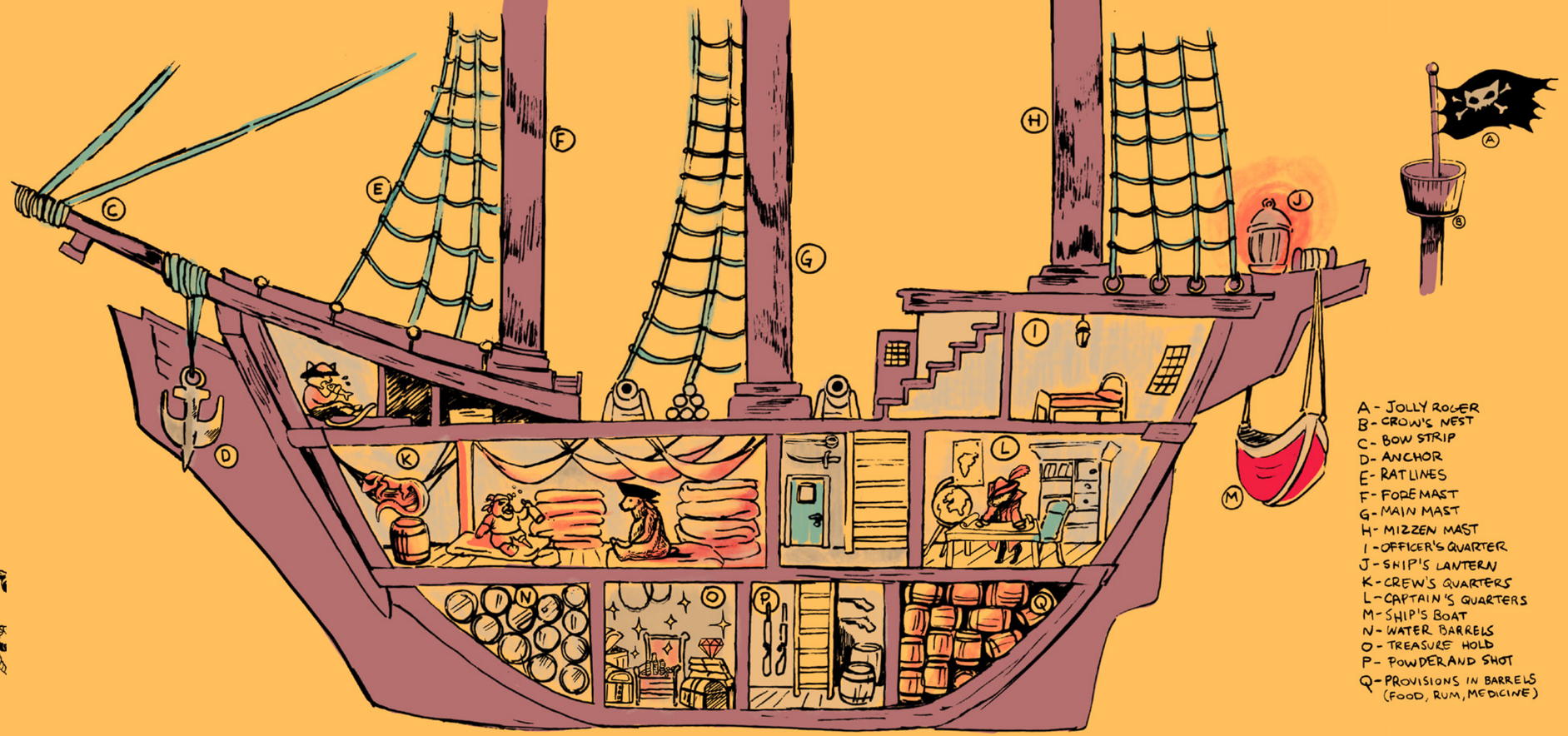
Published under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public Licence

Graphic design by Matt Bonner
Dog Section Press logo by Want Some Studio

In the 17th Century, a new breed of ship – the galleon – shrank the world.

It carried the wealth of empires from nation to nation with a speed never before seen.

Sailors helped to create this wealth, but they did not share in it.


A - JOLLY ROGER
B - CROW'S NEST
C - BOW STRIP
D - ANCHOR
E - RATLINES
F - FORE MAST
G - MAIN MAST
H - MIZZEN MAST
I - OFFICER'S QUARTER
J - SHIP'S LANTERN
K - CREW'S QUARTERS
L - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS
M - SHIP'S BOAT
N - WATER BARRELS
O - TREASURE HOLD
P - POWDER AND SHOT
Q - PROVISIONS IN BARRELS (FOOD, RUM, MEDICINE)

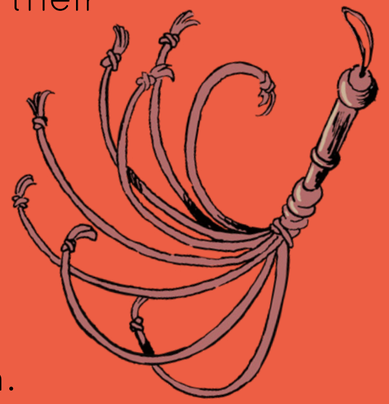
Being a sailor was a truly terrible job.

Ships were the factories of the sea for newly emerging empires.

These floating factories were just as miserable a place to work as those on land.

Captains were the boss onboard, and they treated their crews how they pleased.

A sailor's life was one of hard work and hunger, low wages and the whip.



Though nobody would choose this life, these sailors had no other option.

But sometimes the downtrodden sailors *did* make another choice:

They chose to rebel!

Acting together in joyous rebellion they could take control of the ship and become **PIRATES!**

No sailor made this choice lightly.

If ever they were caught, the punishment would be the most severe imaginable.

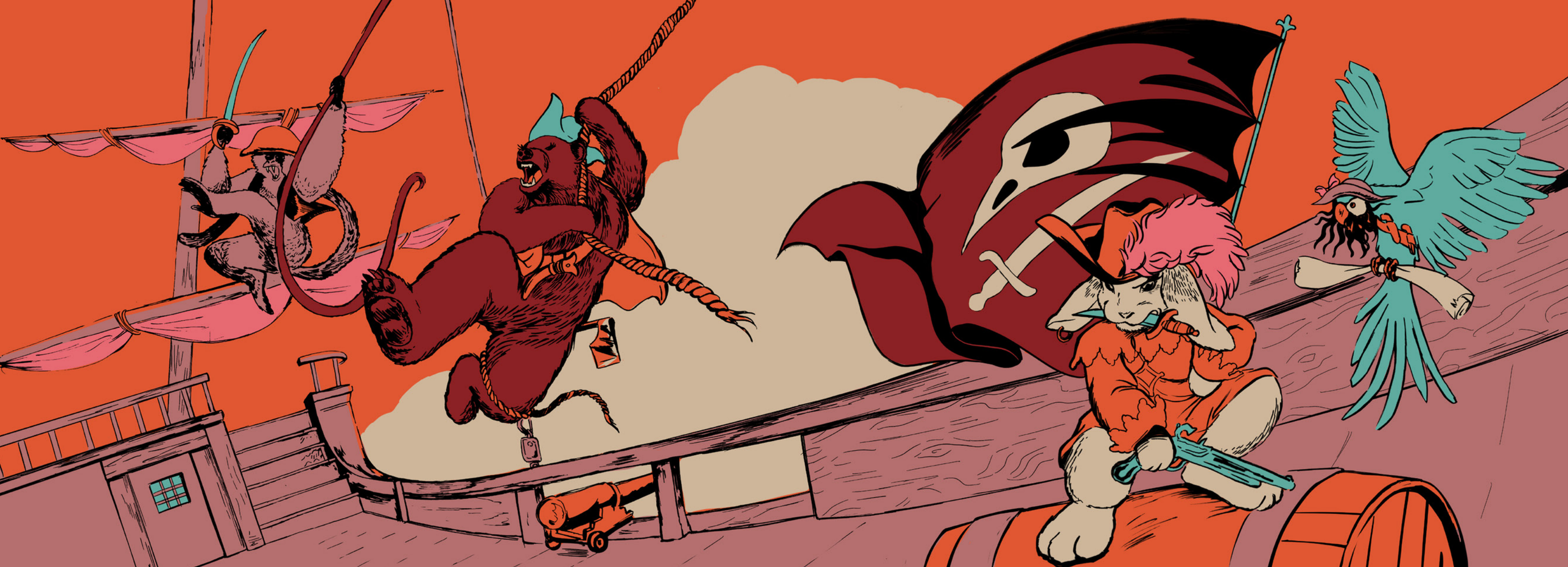
It is for this reason that pirates proudly proclaim:

OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH!

This was the price pirates paid for freedom.

But they paid it gladly, for now they were captains of their own destiny.

The boss was overboard, and the crew collectively took charge.



The pirates decided for themselves who would be their new leader.

If they didn't like them, they'd just replace them.

The whip was a thing of the past.

Pirates plundered the galleons of the masters who had once exploited and enslaved them.

Any wealth they might happen upon would be shared among the crew.

They elected a Quartermaster: the person they trusted to make sure the bounty was split fairly.

Before, the sailors' lives were drenched in misery,

But now these pirates proceeded with much mirth and merriment.

This new-found freedom was spent in singing and dancing under their sails, over the high seas...

This is not to say that pirates were not feared – indeed, they were.

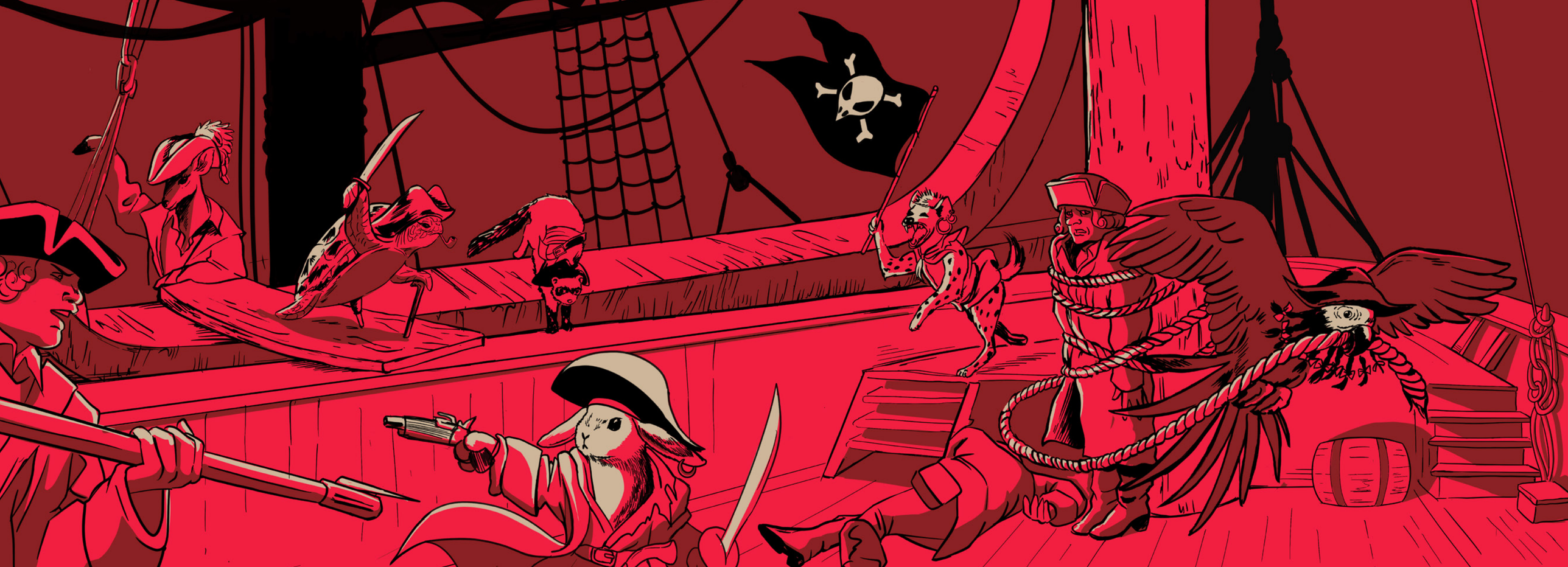
But they were not bloodthirsty.

The mere sight of their black and white flags scared their former bosses so much that – if they had any sense – they would give up without a fight.

When pirates captured another ship, they would tie the captain to the mast.

Anyone who wanted to escape this tyrant would be allowed to join the pirate crew.

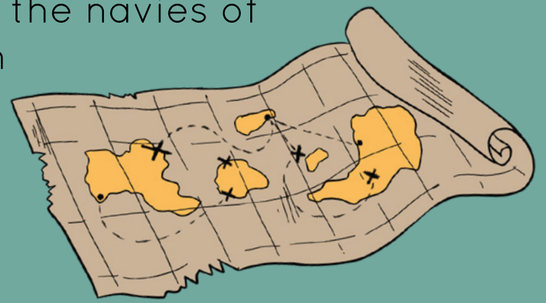
If the captain had treated his crew well, he might be set free; if not, the pirates would take their revenge on the loathsome old boss...



Of course, the rulers of empires could not allow free rebels roaming the seas,

Plundering the wealth that they themselves had plundered.

To protect their profits, the navies of all nations hunted down the pirates mercilessly.



Although the golden age of pirates
may be over,

Their legend lives on in anyone who carries
the spirit of rebellion in their heart,

And sails defiantly under the flag of liberty...

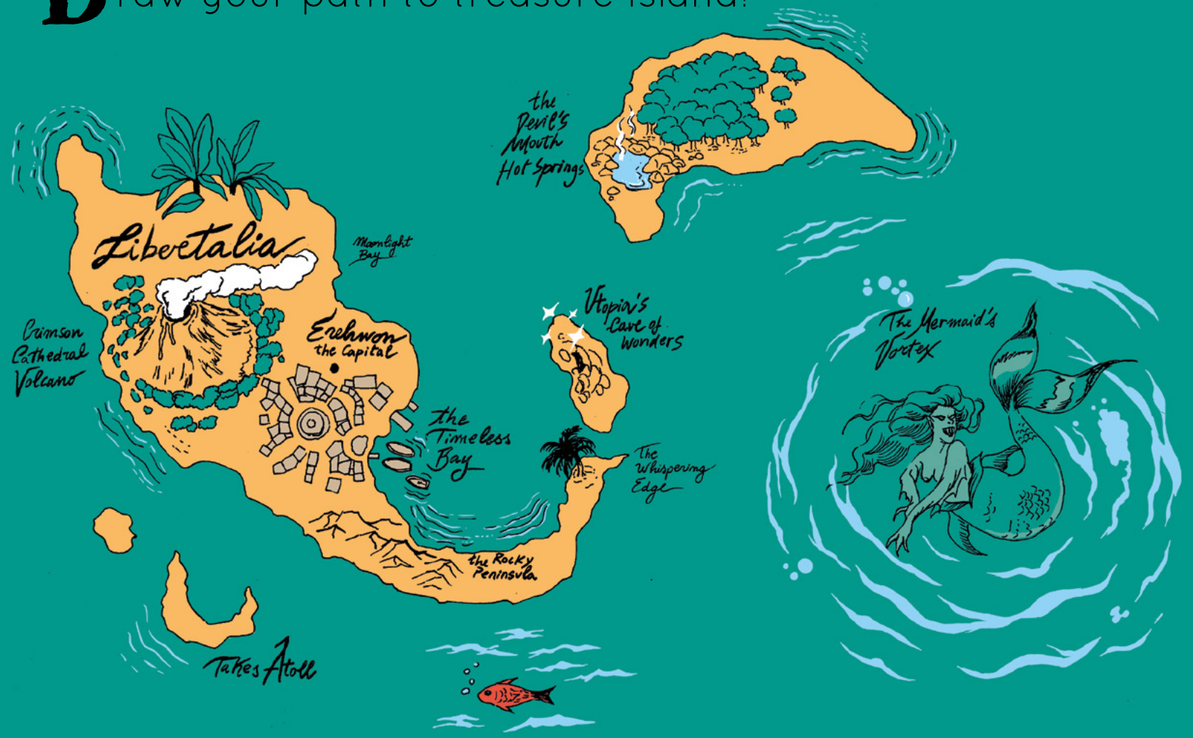
BLACK BIRD

ANNE BUNNY

CALICO JACKAL

MARY DEER

Draw your path to treasure island!



This fictional story is based on the true accounts of pirates taken from:

A General History of the Most Notorious Pirates by Captain Charles Johnson

A True Historie & Account of the Pyrate Captain Misson
by Larry Law

Life Under the Jolly Roger: Reflections on the Golden Age of Piracy
by Gabriel Kuhn

Pirate Enlightenment, or The Real Libertalia
by David Graeber

Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes
by Peter Lamborn Wilson

The History of Pirates
by Philip Gosse

Under the Banner of King Death
by David Lester & Marcus Rediker

Villains of All Nations
by Marcus Rediker

DOUBLE
WHY

£6

9781739421625